DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 754 CS 504 766

TITLE Speech Communication Education and Classroom Interaction: Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations Published in "Dissertation Abstracts International," July through December 1984 (Vol. 45 Nos. 1 through 6).

INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Urbana, Ill.

PUB DATE 84

NOTE 8p.; Pages may be marginally legible.

PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; Cognitive Processes; *Communication Apprehension; *Communication Problems; *Communication Research; Communication Skills; Course Content; Curriculum Development; Doctoral Dissertations; Higher Education; *Speech Communication; *Speech Curriculum; *Speech Instruction; Teacher Education; Teacher Role

IDENTIFIERS Communicator Style

ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The seven titles deal with the following topics: (1) the effects of a seven-hour communication training program on participant utilization of six components of communication style; (2) communication skills and cognitive processes in productively reducing uncertainty in ambiguous instructional messages; (3) imitation of model speakers by students of speech in their own milieu; (4) the PSI-based and lecture-recitation formats of the basic course in speech communication; (5) reduction of oral communication apprehension in college students; (6) academic achievement and self-reports of communication skills in older undergraduates; and (7) instruction in teacher communication with parents offered within secondary school education programs at colleges and universities. (FL)

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

Allred, June Ragland
THE EFFECTS OF A SEVEN-HOUR COMMUNICATION TRAINING PROGRAM ON PARTICIPANT UTILIZATION OF SIX COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION STYLE

Cohen, Cynthia Rae
COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN PRODUCTIVELY REDUCING UNCERTAINTY IN AMBIGUOUS INSTRUCTIONAL MESSAGES

Gardner, John William
IMITATION OF MODEL SPEAKERS BY STUDENTS OF SPEECH IN THEIR OWN MILIEU: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Gray, Pamela Lynn
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO FORMATS OF THE BASIC COURSE IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION: PSI-BASED AND LECTURE-RECITATION

Hayden, Brenda Kay
REDUCTION OF ORAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION: EXPERIMENTAL COMPARISONS OF THREE TREATMENTS

Katz, Virginia Teare
OLDER UNDERGRADUATES: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-REPORTS OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Meeks, Laura M.
INSTRUCTION IN TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS OFFERED WITHIN SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

THE EFFECTS OF A SEVEN-HOUR COMMUNICATION TRAINING PROGRAM ON PARTICIPANT UTILIZATION OF SIX COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION STYLE

Order No. DA8413210

ALLRED, JUNE RAGLAND, PH.D. *The American University*, 1984. 117pp.

The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of a 7-hour communication training program (Human Interaction Workshop, HIW) on participant utilization of six components of communication style, in aggregate, as assessed by the Communication Style Inventory (CSI). The six components of communication were empathy, respect/warmth, concreteness, genuineness/self-disclosure, confrontation/gentle assertiveness, and immediacy. The aggregate measure of these six components of communication was the CSI Index, which was calculated from participant self-reports on the CSI.

The CSI was designed by the researcher to elicit data for the study and offered respondents the opportunity to describe characteristic ways in which they communicate with others. The HIW, developed by the researcher, was based on the work of Rogers, Carkhuff, and other researchers and practitioners in the field of human communication.

Data for the research were collected from a sample of 95 employees from the study population of employees of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Two experimental groups, a Management group of subjects (N = 23) in U.S. government pay levels 11 through 15 and a Support group of subjects (N = 20) in levels 5 through 10, participated in the HIW and completed the CSI at pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed follow-up test intervals. Two control groups of employees, a Management group (N = 28) and a Support group (N = 24), completed the CSI at intervals equal to those of the experimental groups.

Participation in the HIW resulted in significant improvement in participants' self-perception of utilization of communication skills as indicated by their higher scores on the CSI. Participants scored significantly higher ($p \leq 0.01$) on the CSI than nonparticipants 1 month following the HIW. Management level participants scored significantly higher ($p \leq 0.01$) than management level nonparticipants 1 month following the HIW. Nonmanagement level participants scored significantly higher ($p \leq 0.01$) than nonmanagement level nonparticipants 1 month following the HIW. One month following the workshop, Support individuals who participated in the HIW scored significantly higher ($p \leq 0.01$) on the CSI than those Management individuals who did not participate in the HIW.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND COGNITIVE PROCESSES IN PRODUCTIVELY REDUCING UNCERTAINTY IN AMBIGUOUS INSTRUCTIONAL MESSAGES

COHEN, CYNTHIA RAE, PH.D. *University of Southern California*, 1984. Chairman: Professor Richard E. Clark

An investigation was made of the effects of training to detect and/or to reduce uncertainty on subsequent performance on two detection and two reduction tasks in a 2 x 2 factorial design that contrasted 2 levels of detection (training vs. no training) with two levels of reduction (training vs. no training).

Problem. Developmental studies of classroom problems typically find children unable to detect and/or reduce uncertainty about instructions or learning materials. Previous studies were characterized as having taught only detection but tested detection and reduction. It was reasoned that students need to learn both how to detect and reduce uncertainty. Detecting uncertainty was defined as recognizing that more than one object possesses the attribute needed to satisfy the task demand for one correct answer. Reduction of uncertainty involves identifying a "unique" attribute that will eliminate alternative choices and satisfy the task demand.

Method. Seventy-two 6th-graders were simultaneously pretested by experimenters on two picture and two map tasks designed to measure ability in detection and reduction. (Reliabilities and intercorrelations between traits and methods are reported.) Classrooms were randomly assigned to the four groups: Detection + Reduction ($D + R$), Detection only (D), Reduction only (R), and no treatment controls. Forty-minute training sessions conducted in the classroom by graduate students commenced two weeks after the pretest period was completed. D and R commenced their training when $D + R$ began their reduction session. Posttesting commenced one week later. ANCOVA with the respective pretest as covariate was performed on the 2 x 2 factorial design for statistical analysis of the hypotheses.

Conclusions. The task analytic approach which delineates between the cognitive skills involved in detecting and reducing ambiguity was partially confirmed here. Reduction training, as expected, improved reduction scores and did not affect detection scores. However, detection training did not activate any additional skill in detection. Sixth graders may already have the requisite ability for detection, but not reduction. Interactions between training conditions are obtained and discussed. Further study needs to investigate individual differences in prior ability of these skills.

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IMITATION OF MODEL SPEAKERS BY STUDENTS OF SPEECH IN THEIR OWN MILIEU: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Order No. DA8409039

GARDNER, JOHN WILLIAM, PH.D. *The Pennsylvania State University*, 1983. 183pp. Adviser: Dr. Gerald M. Phillips

The purpose of this study was to discover whether or not imitation is still a viable concept in speech training. A descriptive study was conducted to discover if students learning to speak in various situations made a conscious effort to imitate, or tried to imitate others in their own milieu, to use them as speech models. Did they set goals to imitate, specify ideals about others, or express a desire to be like others in speech?

In order to gather information for this study, an inquiry was conducted among three groups of students at The Pennsylvania State University and the State University of New York at Oneonta, using self-reports. From these reports, data were collected and analyzed.

The results showed that students do identify their speech with others, that they identify both positive and negative speech models, but they do not consciously imitate others for their own improvement although they have the ability to do so.

It was concluded that imitation is a viable method for teaching speech. Most students, except for certain reticent students, can imitate other speakers and should be encouraged to do so as part of their speech training. Modelling can be used for analysis of students' ability to speak, for setting goals and objectives in speech training, and to some extent, in diagnosing certain nonpathological speech disorders.

In addition to these conclusions, certain implications for further study have been suggested.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO FORMATS OF THE BASIC COURSE IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION: PSI-BASED AND LECTURE-RECITATION

Order No. DA8419600

GRAY, PAMELA LYNN, PH.D. *The Pennsylvania State University*, 1984. 222pp. Adviser: David E. Butt

The study presented here compares two different methods of teaching the basic speech communication course at Central Michigan University: a traditional lecture-recitation method and an experimental method based on the Personalized System of Instruction. The desire to keep a quality basic course while dealing with economic pressures on the department and time pressures on the faculty led to this research. The study offers findings with respect to student attitudes, student self-perceptions, student self-esteem, student cognitive and skill achievement, and student and instructor satisfaction with the course.

Data collection was accomplished in five steps: pretest questionnaire, posttest questionnaire, grade collection, instructor feedback form, and student interviews. Student subjects in this study consisted of 793 lecture-recitation format students and 161 PSI-based format students. Means for the two groups were compared using two-tailed t-test with a probability level of .05. Information also was gathered from open-ended feedback forms and interviews and was reported in descriptive form.

The statistical analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference between students in the two formats in these areas: change in personal reports of communication anxiety, final examination grades, final course grades, and overall student satisfaction with the course. The PSI-based format students changed or performed more consistently in a positive direction in all of these areas. No statistically significant differences were found in these areas: change in attitudes toward the course, change in self-perceptions of communication abilities, change in perceptions of effect of the basic course on communication abilities, change in feelings of self-esteem, and final speech grades. The descriptive data showed both the students and the instructors in the PSI-based format overall were more satisfied with the quality of the course.

On the basis of this research, the PSI-based format holds much promise for future use in basic speech communication courses. It seems educationally sound and is current with trends in the field. This system also maintains close interaction with students while still being time- and cost-effective.

REDUCTION OF ORAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION: EXPERIMENTAL COMPARISONS OF THREE TREATMENTS

Order No. DA8412731

HAYDEN, BRENDA KAY, PH.D. *George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University*, 1983. 149pp. Major Professor: Jack Miller

Research on oral communication apprehension (OCA) reveals a significant number of college students are affected negatively by this phenomenon. Because OCA is learned, and reinforced by experience, the theoretical assumption is that it may be reduced by appropriate training.

The major purpose of this investigation was to assess three alternative OCA reduction treatments. Highly apprehensive students received treatment in (a) skills training, (b) cognitive restructuring plus skills training, or (c) systematic desensitization plus skills training. These subjects and others with a "normal" range of OCA who received traditional speech instruction were tested prior to and following a 14-week semester. The instrument used was McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24).[1]

Students' PRCA-24 scores in four context areas--as well as in overall communication apprehension--were compared through analyses of variance and covariance.

Results indicated all four treatments were effective in significantly reducing apprehension about oral communication in the four contexts--as well as the overall level of OCA. Differential effectiveness was not found among the three experimental treatments.

Within each treatment group, however, significant differences were found among the four OCA contexts. The hierarchy of apprehension ranged from the most threatening (public speaking), to meeting participation, group discussion, and conversation (least threatening).

Highly apprehensive students had a pretest mean of 96.97, while the pretest mean of those having a "normal" level of OCA was 64.75, a difference of 32.22 points. Following the 14-week training period, posttest means of the two groups declined to 70.77 and 56.67, respectively. Thus, the mean differences were reduced by more than half, to 14.10 points.

It was concluded that the reduction treatments are beneficial to students with high OCA. Replication of the study--with new treatment combinations and modifications of emphases within treatments--seems warranted. This might include greater emphasis on public speaking than on the other three contexts.

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[1] J. C. McCroskey, *Oral Communication Apprehension: Reconceptualization and a New Look at Measurement*. Paper presented at the Central State Speech Association, Chicago, 1981 & Louisville, 1982.

OLDER UNDERGRADUATES: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-REPORTS OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Order No. DA8416277

KATZ, VIRGINIA TEARE, PH.D. *Kent State University*, 1984. 173pp. Director: Jerry Feezel

This study explored the relationship between a set of predictor variables consisting of communicative competency, type and extent of prior speech-communication experience, age and sex and a set of criterion variables consisting of academic achievement and satisfaction with college. The subjects were 154 undergraduates at the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD) with 84 of the students over the age of 25, and 70 of them younger than 25.

The review of the literature revealed little research done on older undergraduates other than needs assessments and demographic studies. Some writers in the field believe that older women have a more positive and successful academic life than older men, who may be viewed as "failures" for returning to or starting college at an advanced age.

Communicative competency was operationalized as the score on the Social Management Scale (SMS) and the score on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS). Academic achievement was operationalized as grade-point average. Satisfaction with college was tested by the score on the Satisfaction with UMD Scale (USAT) and response to the single-item Attitude toward UMD Scale (UMDATT). Type and extent of prior speech-communication experience was assessed by a rating on each of 17 different types of organized communication activities.

A canonical correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between the sets of variables. The results of this analysis show that the SMS score, age, three types of speech-communication experience, grade-point average, and UMDATT contributed to the relationship. A post-hoc canonical correlation analysis recast all 17 types of speech experience into a single variable. In this analysis, SMS score, age, sex, RAS score, GPA, and USAT contributed to the relationship, with the RAS score being negatively correlated. There was a greater tendency for older females who have a higher SMS score to have a higher GPA, a higher USAT score, and a lower RAS score. The results of this study, then, correspond with findings in the literature that older women have a more successful and positive undergraduate experience than older men.

INSTRUCTION IN TEACHER COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS OFFERED WITHIN SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Order No. DA8415657

MEEKS, LAURA M., PH.D. *Kansas State University*, 1984. 286pp.

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes held by directors of secondary teacher-education programs toward competencies which may be included in programs of instruction for teacher communication with parents. The study measured the relative degree of importance these teacher-preparation directors place upon pre-service parent-communication instruction and surveyed the manner in which students received instruction in these skills.

The investigator examined the literature for criteria to survey the status and future trends of parent communication education. Data were obtained from a researcher-made questionnaire sent to directors of secondary education departments in 159 NCATE approved colleges and universities. Responses were analyzed through mean computations and rankings with responses to open-ended questions presented in narrative form.

Conclusions. The primary conclusion was that secondary education directors at least moderately endorse the inclusion of fifty-three specific teacher-communication-with-parent competencies in the curriculum. The data analysis showed strong recommendation for twenty-seven of these competencies with directors perceiving a moderate to considerable need for attention to the fifty-three competencies as compared to all other teaching competencies. All respondents agreed some attention should be given to these parent-involvement competencies. A small percentage of institutions incorporate specific parent/teacher objectives in courses. Only one institution reported requiring a course focusing upon these competencies for secondary education majors. Respondents strongly agreed little or no instruction may produce teachers who demonstrate moderate competency in communication with parents.

A conclusion drawn from the findings was that there is a mass body of knowledge relative to parent-involvement competencies which could be taught to pre service teachers. Teacher education directors indicated support for including parent participation instruction in undergraduate-teacher curriculum. They generally agreed teachers have considerable need for skills in parent conference, in cooperating with parents through mutual understanding, and being able to provide information to parents regarding each individual student and to provide general information regarding the educational process. Responses showed the type of parent-involvement competencies directors see as appropriate are those giving parents little authority in school decision making. The respondents were also less interested in the teacher's role to facilitate instruction through volunteer classroom aides or through helping parents teach their children at home.

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